

TESTIMONY OF
LAUREN GYGAX
MARYLAND PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

TESTIMONY OF
BRITTANY BAKER
MARYLAND DIRECTOR

MIKE TIDWELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HB 066 - Environment-Regional Gas Initiative-Withdrawal

UNFAVORABLE

Environment and Transportation

February 2, 2026

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) is a key part of Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction plan and passing legislation to remove Maryland from this program would be a mistake. RGGI is a multistate program that requires fossil fuel-fired power plants to reduce their CO₂ emissions through the market forces of a cap and trade system.

CO₂ is a dangerous air pollutant and a primary contributor to climate change; therefore, it must be regulated. The RGGI program is one of the most robust mechanisms we have to reach our 60% greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal by 2031. Since its start in 2009, RGGI has cut carbon pollution in half in participating states.¹ The health benefits from RGGI are valued at \$5.7 billion, with reductions in childhood asthma and preterm births.² These co-benefits occur because regulating carbon dioxide also reduces the amount of localized air pollution from fossil fuel power plants.

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative's model is an innovative and collaborative way to reduce CO₂. This system works so well because it allows the power generators to make an economic decision to either find a way to pollute less and sell their credits, or to take more credits so they can continue to emit the same amount. Successful Cap & Trade programs reward innovation, efficiency, and early action and, ideally, provide strict environmental accountability without inhibiting economic growth.³

¹ <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/bruce-ho/rggi-lowers-bills-saving-consumers-billions-energy>

² <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/regional-greenhouse-gas-initiative-model-nation>

³ <https://fpa.org/carbonomics-the-economics-of-cap-trade/>

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This model is so successful that many states are trying to enter RGGI. Virginia leaders are currently working diligently to try to join the program. The Virginia Attorney General stated that “the Commonwealth reopened the door for participation in RGGI, which we know lowers costs for the most vulnerable Virginians while holding industries accountable to transition to cleaner, more stable, and more affordable sources of energy.”⁴ Virginia saw that withdrawing from RGGI did not lower energy costs, it took away the revenues from RGGI that fund important programs in the state.

Maryland has received \$1 billion from the auction proceeds which is used to generate economic benefits and fund Maryland’s deployment of clean energy, energy assistance for low income households, and climate resiliency projects.⁵ Thanks to energy efficiency measures and cost-saving renewable energy projects RGGI has saved consumers in the region more than \$1.2 billion dollars on energy bills and created 45,000 job-years of work across the region.⁶

RGGI is an essential program for Maryland and therefore, **I request an unfavorable report of HB66.**

⁴<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/23012026/virginia-attorney-general-takes-steps-to-rejoin-the-regional-greenhouse-gas-initiative/>

⁵<https://news.maryland.gov/mde/2022/12/12/maryland-raises-a-billion-dollars-for-climate-progress-and-energy-efficiency/>

⁶ <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/regional-greenhouse-gas-initiative-model-nation>